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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 001625

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE

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SUBJECT: MFA UNDER SECRETARY ON CYPRUS, AEGEAN, ARMENIA

REF: ANKARA 1568

Classified By: Ambassador James Jeffrey, for reasons 1.4(b,d)

11. SUMMARY. In a November 10 discussion with the Ambassador, Turkish MFA Under Secretary Sinirlioglu:

-- urged that the US get involved in the Cyprus talks and noted that the 2006 Finnish proposal for the Additional Ankara Protocol is "still on the table";
-- indicated that while flights in the vicinity of Farmakonisi and Agathonisi are back on, that he has told the Turkish military to lower the frequency of such overflights and to cease direct overflights of islands, maintaining more distance and altitude;
-- suggested that creative ways be found to provide security assurances for Yerevan if it implements the first principle by itself (withdrawal from five rayons), thereby allowing Ankara to ratify the Armenia Protocols. END SUMMARY.

Cyprus

12. (C) On Cyprus, Sinirlioglu warned that it is not only a big problem now, but threatens to become a bigger problem. He said he had told the EU Presidency in Stockholm last week that the EU needs to be fair and just, instead of punishing "the one who had done the right thing." (Note: This is a reference to the 2004 referendum on the Annan Plan. End Note). He complained that some in the EU are using Cyprus as an excuse. He also criticized the USG for not delivering on its promises in 2004 to help lift the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots. The EU had promised the same thing in writing -- and had even prepared the necessary regulation -- but had not followed through. The result was "unjust and insulting." It was "cheating," Sinirlioglu said, and something that still rankles with PM Erdogan.

13. (C) Sinirlioglu said Ankara had been prepared to go along with the Finnish EU Presidency proposal in 2006 to open up a Turkish port to the Greek Cypriots in return for lifting restrictions on Ercan Airport, but the Greek Cypriots had not been cooperative. Nevertheless, this proposal is "still on the table." Turkey remains focused on a comprehensive solution, which Turkish Cypriot leader Talat also wants. However, Greek Cypriot leader Christofias appears determined to "marginalize the talks." Christofias argues that this is an internal problem of Cyprus -- but it is not. It is an international problem, which Ankara is ready to deal with. The two sides already have sorted out power-sharing. They need to address property, after which the issue of guarantees could be broached. Sinirlioglu emphasized that the USG also should be involved. Christofias needs to bring about a change of mood among the Greek Cypriots, otherwise a solution will remain out of reach. "Therefore, we want to convince you and the U.N. to do more."

Aegean

¶4. (C) The Ambassador took the opportunity to raise Turkish overflights in the Aegean. Most troubling were overflights of Farmakonisi and Agathanosi, two Dodecanese Islets. These types of actions are impossible to explain to Washington, and even if Turkey were so dumb as to question the sovereignty of these islands, whose ownership is clear by treaty agreement, low level overflights would not be the way. Sinirlioglu replied that "I got your point," and said he agrees with it. There had been a moratorium in place, but it had ended November 1. He said he has told the military to lower the frequency, and not to fly directly over these islands. To address the issue, Ankara also had proposed a "working map" to Greek Prime Minister Papandreou. Turkey is prepared to come together, to address problems and to find solutions.

Armenia

¶5. (C) On Armenia, Sinirlioglu said Turkey and the US need to work together on what has become a "dangerous slope." No one should underestimate the courage that had been required for the signatures alone. If we act in a pessimistic way, "everything will crumble." If Armenia could accept implementing the first principle by itself (withdrawal from the five rayons), Turkey would ratify the protocol and the entire equilibrium can be changed. Armenia President Sargsian has said he cannot withdraw from these five rayons because the security situation in the two remaining rayons would be precarious. Therefore, President Gul has proposed that a way be found to allow the Armenians not be feel undermined. This could start the "breakthrough," he said.

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The Ambassador noted that the US had posed this to Yerevan before but had not gotten far. Sinirlioglu suggested that the message should come from a higher level.

JEFFREY

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